

SUICIDE: A PASTORAL RESPONSE

LEADING GOD'S PEOPLE THROUGH TRAGEDY

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The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law. Deuteronomy 29:29

[Nothing] ... in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:39

A. A CONTEMPORARY REALITY

B. A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

1. Suicide is *sin*

- *Judges 9:52*
- *1 Sam 31:4-6*
- *2 Sam 17:23*
- *1 Kings 16:18*
- *Matthew 27:3-10, Acts 1:18-19*

2. Suicide is not an *unforgivable sin*

- *Romans 8:31-39*
- *Luke 23:32-43*

3. Suicidal thoughts can *accompany real, saving faith*

- *Psalms 38:10, 17*
- *Psalms 55:4-8*
- *Job 10:1*
- *1 Kings 19:4-8*

C. A PASTORAL RESPONSE

1. Life on the brink

Pastoring the suicidal

- Know your people
- Know your limits
- Beware simple answers
- Don't be afraid to raise the topic, but put the emphasis on asking questions rather than giving answers

Why do people commit suicide?

2. When darkness falls

Pastoring the survivors

- Grief and trauma
- Shock, numbness, disbelief
- Distraction
- Sorrow and despair
- Rejection and abandonment
- Failure, guilt and regret
- Shame
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Relief

3. Standing together in grief

Pastoring the supporters

Further reading:

Brian Chapell (ed), *The Hardest sermons you'll ever have to preach* (Crossway)

David Powlison, *I just want to die: Replacing suicidal thoughts* (CCEF)

_____, *Grieving a suicide: Help for the aftershock* (CCEF)

John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (P&R)

C. S. Lewis, *A Grief observed* (Zondervan)

Mark Meynell, *When darkness is my closest friend: Reflections on life and ministry with depression* (IVP)

Al Shu, *Grieving a suicide: The search for comfort, answers and hope* (IVP)

Nicholas Wolterstoff, *Lament for a Son* (Eerdmans)